

Edinburgh Incorporations

Coffee-House CHIT CHAT,

O R,

STRICTURES on a STRANGE PAPER,

dated Mary's Chapel, August 26. 1777.

A. N. D.

Signed C-----r J--n L----y Preses.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]





Early English and British Law, 1600-1800, in the Library of

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STRICTURES on a STRANGE PAPER,

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Signed by C---r J---n L----y Preses.

PRAY, Who is this L——y? says one. Don't you see, says another, that he is Conveener of the Trades of Edinburgh; and therefore Preses of that Meeting. Bleſſ me! cries a third, have they graſed F—cie B—d—e? Ay, to be ſure, says the other; and, Who do you think would take his Chain from him, but this L——y?—Did not he, about twelve years ago, take the Chain from a better Man? He is very proud of graſing and ſupplanting others. But, Who are these Delegates? Whence do they come? Are they come from America, deputed from the Congress there, to ſow ſedition and rebellion here also? O no, says the other, they are deputed from the fourteen incorporations of Edinburgh, as the moſt proper perſons to take the management of this great City into their own hands. This they attempted to obtain by Law, but are now determined on a ſhorter proceſſ,—to take it by Force.

THIS ſet the whole Company a-laughing; and they all agreed, that this fame L——y muſt be a very moſteſt Gentleman, to ſign a Paper, fraught with ſuch groſſ abuse, malevo- lence, falsehood and impudence.

SUCH was my entertainment at the Coffee-house: But being deſirous to understand ſomething more of this ſtrange matter,

I purchased the News-paper, and called on a Friend, who I knew would instruct me.

BEING accordingly set down to a glass, we canvassed the whole paper; and indeed, so much to my satisfaction, that I determined to communicate my Friend's sentiments to the Public; not doubting that many would be equally glad to be informed.

FIRST then, he acquainted me that these Delegates, like those in America, for their manifest turbulence and malevolence of spirit, are wisely kept back from the administration of the City; and that it was for that purpose, that the power of shortening the Leets was judged proper to be in the Council by the most able Statesman our Country ever produced; and this, for a great series of years, has been the practice and means of preserving peace and quiet in the City: But nothing, however wisely intended, will prevent those, who are naturally discontented, and sometimes disappointed, from growling.

BUT what are these insults, said I, committed against the Trades within these twelve months?

WHY, it is all nonsense; and merely calculated to spread their factious and malevolent spirit among the inhabitants. They abuse the Council for doing, what they, or indeed any man, would have done in their place. Mr B—d—e, here mentioned, had been one year with them in Council, professing himself their friend, and was received by them as such, and chosen one of six Deacons, who make up the ordinary Council, and have a vote upon all occasions; whereas the other eight Deacons have no vote in Council, except on extraordinary occasions, expressly mentioned in the constitution or set of the City, and are therefore called Extraordinary Deacons. Unluckily for Mr B—d—e, Mr S—d—t, as the report of the Town goes, had taken a fancy that he should be appointed to some good birth, like Mr L—ie before him; and dreading some other might come between him and the prize, endeavoured to make

make up a party, with which he was determined to command, and appear of great importance. But to make the matter more plain to you, it is necessary I should acquaint you with the steps of the election.

In the first place, the fourteen Incorporations are ordered by the Council to make out leets of six, and from each of these leets the Council have the appointment of three, whom they return to their respective Incorporations, out of whom they must elect their Deacon, which is more power, and greater liberty than the Trades had in former times, and is a privilege superior to any enjoyed by the whole Merchants of the City, who, with all due respect to the Trades, may be allowed to be as respectable a part of the community.

WELL, the fourteen Deacons being elected by their several Incorporations, are presented to the Council, and they elect six of them, as I told you before, to be Council Deacons. Mr B—d—e having, previous to last election, acted in manifest opposition, not only to his friends in Council, but to his own professions, made both in conversation and in the public newspapers, was not re-elected a Council Deacon, but, instead of him, the Deacon of the Shoemakers, of whom we shall only say, as they do of the lying-in-women, that he, *honest Man*, did as well as could be expected.

WELL, from the account you have given me, I find the Council has done nothing but what was incumbent on them ; and they are very much in the right, to deprive turbulent people of power to disturb them. This very paper of the Delegates is sufficient to me to demonstrate what spirit they are of. I don't think a more impudent collection of falsehoods, sedition and insolence could be conceived ; and yet I was told they had corrected it :—Pray, could it possibly be worse before ?

TRULY, it is not mended, it was only more scurrility to the same purpose.

LONG may the management of the City be guarded from the hands of such Rulers. How illiberal their abuse ; how

false and groundless their clamour. They complain of the Council shortening their leets, and yet there could be no election at all, were the Council not to do so, as the very set of the City stands thereby.

THEY next complain of the deacon of the Masons being elected a Council Deacon, because of his being in embarrassed circumstances. This the Council did not pry into, nor could any person of the least humanity imagine that Mr S—d—t, and his adherents, the *professed* Patrons of Liberty, could be capable of the enormities they put in practice to distress that unfortunate Gentleman, whose only crime was gratitude to his friend and benefactor. In short, they tampered with his creditors, and even bought up his debts ; and although his creditors had agreed to a *supercedere*, got him put in prison, whence he was immediately liberated by the Lords of Session, which liberation, S—d—t, who was then Provost, rendered useless, by running off with the keys of the prison ; taking on him the honourable office of JAILOR, as you may remember.

BUT what has Sir L— D— done, that they asperse him so dreadfully ?

WHY, you must know, that it is a rule with those gentlemen to vilify and insult every man who does them a favour. Gratitude with them is reckoned venality ; and, consistency of conduct, slavery.

HAS S—r L— D— done much for the City ?

MORE than all the members we ever had before him ; as the records of the different Hospitals will inform posterity, when the present race of grumblers and croakers of sedition shall be laid silent in the grave, the only place where it is possible for them to be quiet.

How many thousands, do you think, has he laid out among tradesmen, and the labouring poor of this place, for a house, merely to diffuse and circulate his money among the industrious ? Does he not, by his great interest at court, preserve

every

every office in the government's gift about this place, for our own poor or fallen back citizens? How many of the citizens themselves has he served upon every occasion? How many of their sons provided in the East Indies and elsewhere? Let the Congress themselves recollect the favours they have received from him, and hide their shameless heads in the darkest corner of obscurity.

BUT, pray what has Sir L—— done in this affair of the Leets?

NOTHING: And you'll observe, that they, with their usual consistency, accuse him of intermeddling, and presently accuse him of not intermeddling; for, say they, "If he had disapproved of the above suspension, he might have prevented all the opposition and expence the Trades have met with," &c. He had no business to interfere on either side. He is Member for the City, and it would have been very imprudent in him to espouse the quarrel of the Trades against the Merchants. He, no doubt, has friends among both, who, as soon as the spirit of sedition, now raised by some designing men, shall subside, will unite to despise the arts at present used to blind them. You may further observe, that the Delegates seem to have forgot that they were only to act in a secondary character, and have assumed that of Masters, or at least, Guardians, set over Minors; who, being unfit to judge for themselves, are only to give their implicit assent to the acts of their Guardians. Thus the Societies were, by order of the Delegates, convened, without being told for what purpose, or being allowed any time to take the impertinent Hodge-podge under their consideration; but ordered immediately to signify their approbation of this very elegant composition, which every Corporation in town were mean enough to submit to, except the Bonnet-makers, who entirely reprobated it. Thus you see, while they have Liberty and specious pretences in their mouths, they are in their hearts contriving chains for their blinded Constituents. Nay, so great in their insolence,

as openly to avow, that none should be elected Deacons, but men of opulent circumstances, who, to be sure, if the shortening of the leets were taken away, would have the full exertion of that superiority which wealth gives them over their poorer, though not less worthy Brethren ; and yet many of the Tradesmen are so deluded, as not to perceive the steps which are taking to throw the Corporations under the subjection of a few over-bearing leaders, who would more miserably oppress them than the Israelites were oppressed in Egypt. For shame, ye Delegates ! Lay aside this glaring partiality for the Rich, and despise not your poor, but worthy and honest Brethren.

BUT I am told that a Great Nobleman, whom every body respects, and a dignified Lawyer, frequently hold meetings with these people, and assist them in concerting and carrying on their plans.

MORE shame to them. No man has a greater respect than I have for his G—e in his private character, yet I must say, that by such conduct he degrades his nobility ; and is besides acting very unwarrantably, not to say meanly, in interfering with the affairs of a Community in which he cannot, by Law, have any concern. As for the Lawyer, he will perhaps soon be called upon to answer to his superiors for fomenting a mob or riot in the City, instead of preserving the peace, as the duty of his office requires. As for Mr S—d—t, he has acted contrary to his duty as a citizen ; and in express violation of his burgess oath, in which he swore, "to make concord, where discord is, to the outmost of his power ;" merely because he had conceived offence without cause ; for I don't hear that he has ever dared to alledge mal-administration, or, impeach any one, for injury done to the Revenue. All that we can hear is only, that he dreaded they would turn him out of the management ; and is it not very unaccountable that the citizens don't see through so thin a disguise ; and, like men, prevent the City from being turned topsy turvy, merely to feed the caprice or pride of that one man ?

